



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

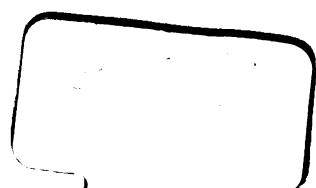
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

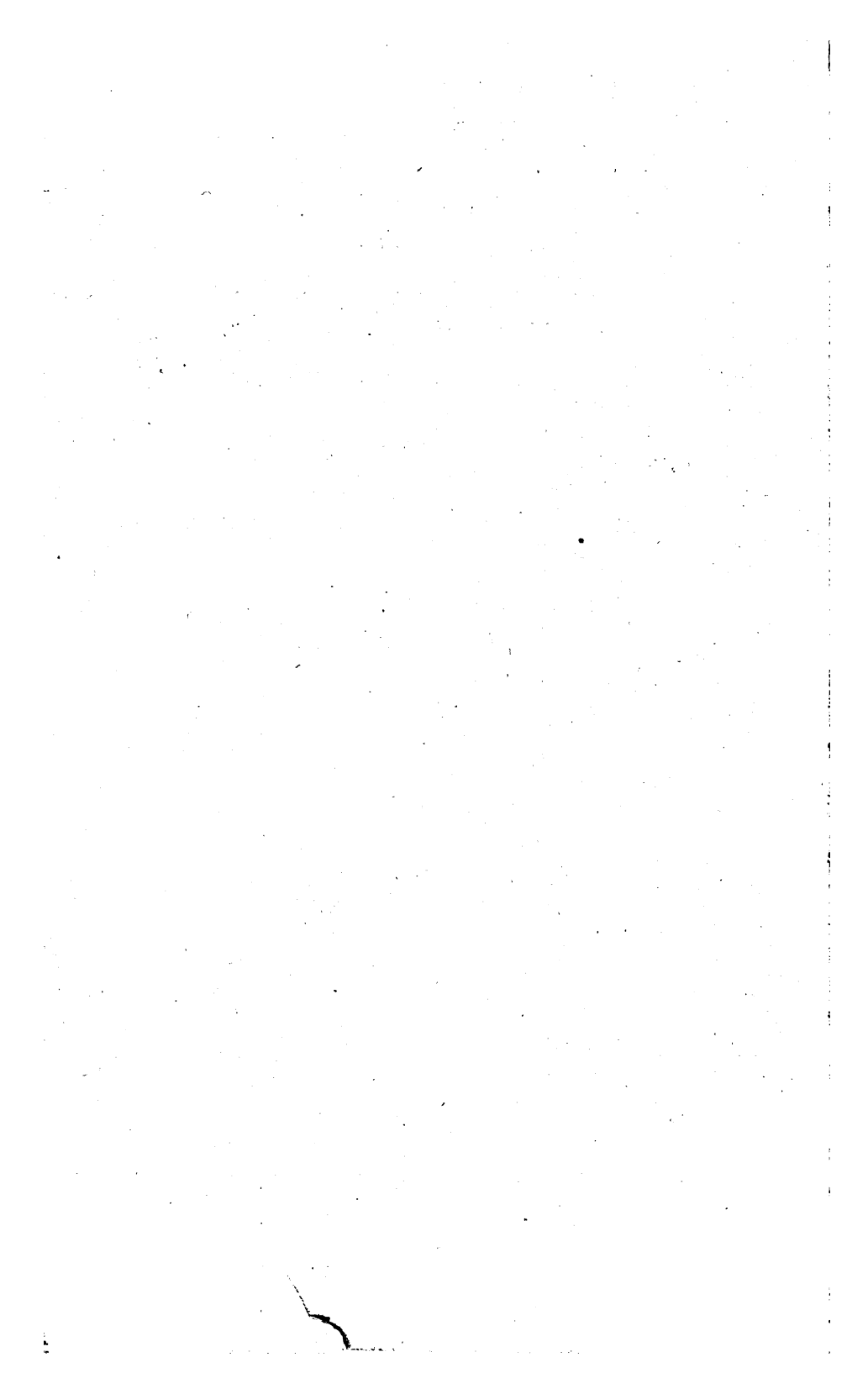


100. 20. 100

EULOGIUM
ON
JOHN SERGEANT,

BY
Hon. WILLIAM M. MEREDITH.

STANFORD LAW LIBRARY



AN¹
BST
AYM

EULOGIUM

ON

THE CHARACTER AND SERVICES

OF THE LATE

JOHN SERGEANT,

PRONOUNCED AT THE REQUEST OF THE

Select and Common Councils of the City of Philadelphia,

AND A

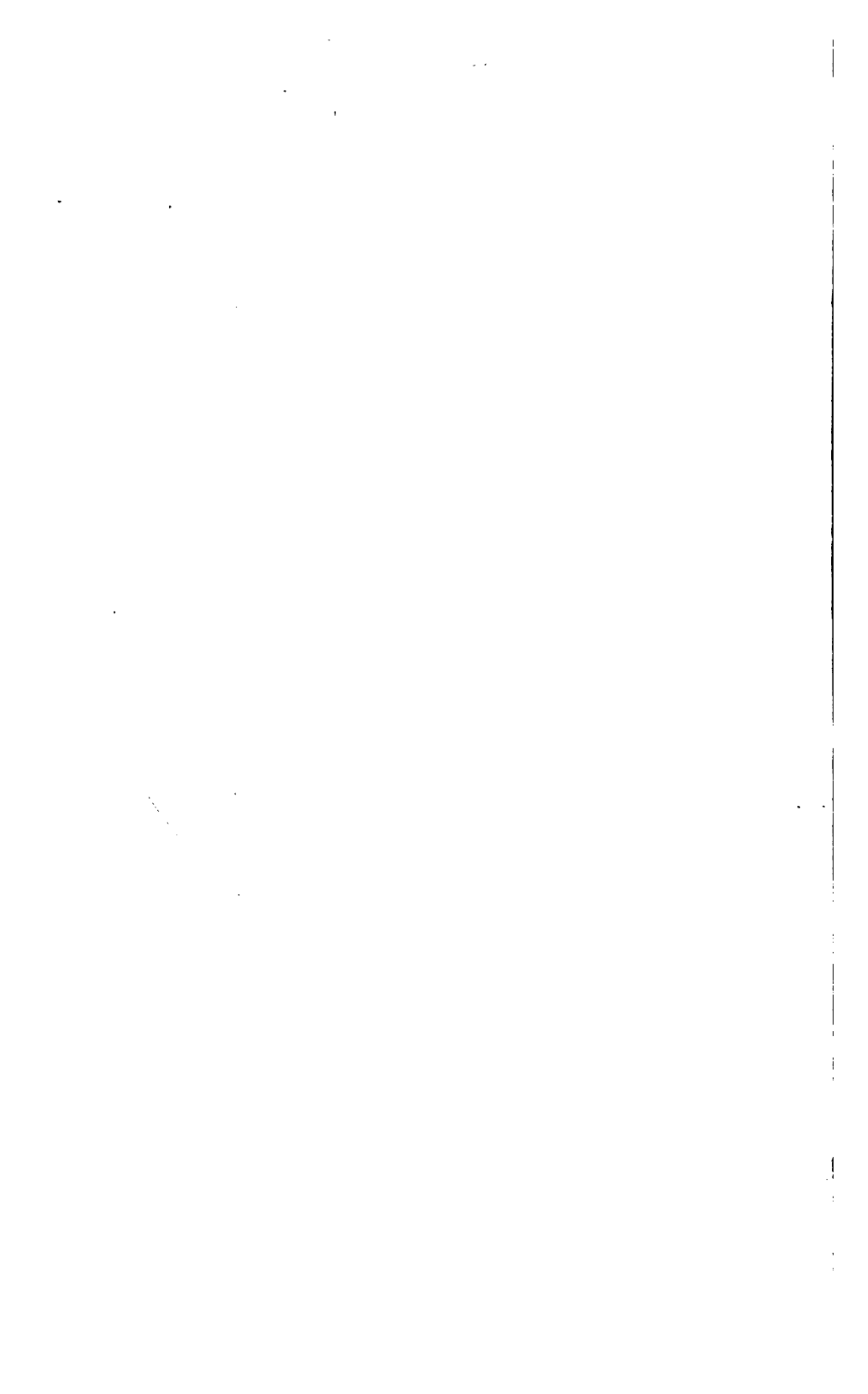
COMMITTEE APPOINTED AT A MEETING OF CITIZENS,

APRIL 22, 1853.

BY HON. WILLIAM M. MEREDITH.

PHILADELPHIA:
CRISSY & MARKLEY, PRINTERS,
GOLDSMITHS HALL, LIBRARY STREET.

1853.



COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL,

May 3d, 1853.

HON. WILLIAM M. MEREDITH.

DEAR SIR:—I have the honor to communicate to you herewith, a copy of a resolution of the committee appointed to devise proper tributes of respect for the memory of the late Hon. John Sergeant, and beg leave to express the hope that you will be pleased to accede to their request therein, and thus furnish them with the means of perpetuating an eloquent and appropriate testimony to the life and character of that great and good man.

With great respect,

Your obedient servant,

CHARLES A. POULSON,

Chairman Joint Special Committee.

In Committee, May 2, 1853.

Resolved, That the Chairman be requested to express to Mr. Meredith the thanks of the Joint Committee, for his Eulogy on the late John Sergeant, delivered at its request at the Musical Fund Hall, on the evening of the 22d of April last, and to ask from him a copy for publication.

CRAIG BIDDLE,

Secretary.

~~~~~  
**Philadelphia, May 11th, 1853.**

MY DEAR SIR:—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your note, enclosing a Resolution of the Committee, asking for publication, a copy of the Eulogium on Mr. Sergeant. It gives me great pleasure to comply with the request of the Committee, and to assure you how sincerely,

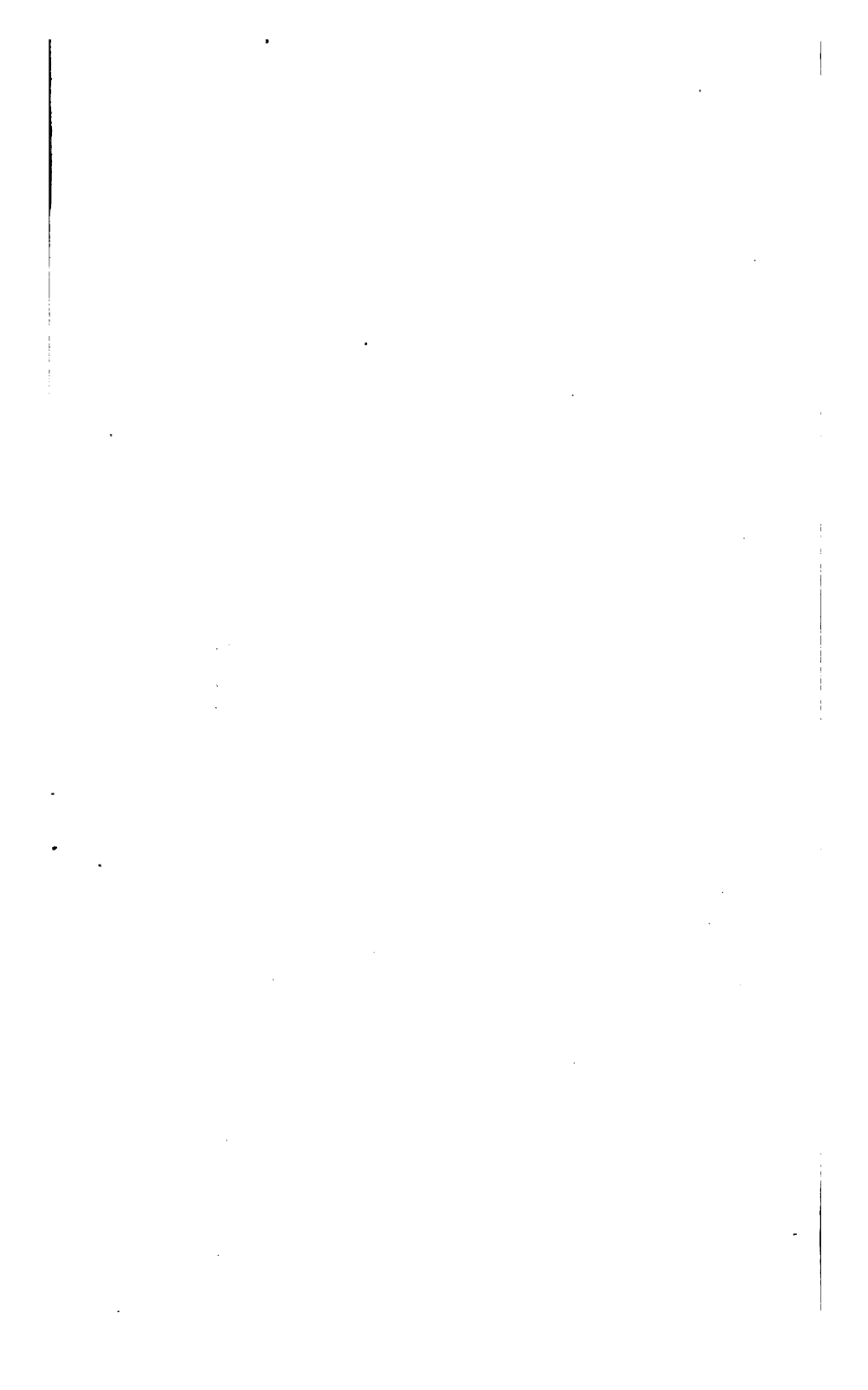
I am, with the highest esteem,

Your friend and servant,

WILLIAM M. MEREDITH.

TO CHARLES A. POULSON, ESQ.

*Chairman, &c.*



# EULOGIUM.

---

WE are assembled this evening, to pay a deserved tribute to the memory of a virtuous man. No custom is more laudable than that which benefits the living by setting forth the example of the illustrious dead. It is a custom, on the due observance of which, depends much of our future public welfare.

To neglect the memory of virtue is to discourage virtue. To lavish prostituted panegyric on profligacy, selfishness and treachery, would be to encourage vice. Our present purpose, is to call to remembrance the career of a man, who in all his relations, public, professional and personal, deserved well of his fellow-citizens; who devoted great intellectual ability, great power of eloquence, and great moral worth, during a long life, to the service of his country; and who had

his reward in the esteem of his enemies, the love of his friends, and the confidence of all.

JOHN SERGEANT was born in the City of Philadelphia, in the year 1779. He was the son of Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant, the first Attorney General of the State of Pennsylvania. His father died of yellow fever, in October 1793, having taken that disease in the discharge of a duty voluntarily assumed by him, as one of the committee of citizens, who, during that period of pestilence and calamity, bestowed their labors, and in some cases sacrificed their lives, in the active charity which the emergency required, from the few who had the courage to bestow it. John Sergeant was educated in the schools of the University of Pennsylvania, till the spring of 1794, when he went to Princeton College, where he graduated in September 1795.

After leaving college, he entered the compting-house of Messrs. ELLISON and JOHN PEROT, with the intention of qualifying himself to become a merchant.

Having changed that intention, in March 1797, he entered the office of the late JARED INGERSOLL, and commenced the regular study of the law.

In July, 1799, he was admitted to practice in the Common Pleas of Philadelphia County. At that time—before the age of twenty—his active life commenced.

His advance in the profession was rapid. In 1800, soon after the first election of GOVERNOR MCKEAN, he was appointed to prosecute for the Commonwealth in Chester County, and during that and several subsequent years, he prosecuted also in Philadelphia County, and occasionally in the Mayor's Court of the City of Philadelphia.

In 1802 he was appointed by MR. JEFFERSON a Commissioner of Bankrupts.

The first occasion which afforded an opportunity for bringing into notice his remarkable ability, was the argument of a case in the year 1806, before the Supreme Court of this State, involving a highly important, and at that time with us, a novel question of law. His argument as junior counsel in that cause, drew from the Bench a well deserved and unusual compliment, and from that period his professional advancement became accelerated. He soon took his station among the foremost, and before long, in the very first rank of the Bar, where he maintained his position, during the greater part of half a century. Without naming his contemporaries of his own age,—some of whom are yet living, and with whom the ability of competition was of itself an honor—an idea may be formed of the professional stature of that day, from the names of some of his seniors, who occupied the most prominent places at the Philadelphia Bar—

then as always, the first in the United States.—  
WILLIAM LEWIS, JARED INGERSOLL, EDWARD TILGH-  
MAN, WILLIAM RAWLE, ALEXANDER J. DALLAS, and  
ALEXANDER WILCOCKS were then in the full maturity  
of life, and of professional vigour. It was among  
these that he was to win his way, and he suc-  
ceeded.

MR. SERGEANT's professional career, honorable and  
laborious, was faithfully, diligently and successfully  
pursued, almost to the close of his life. It would not  
be appropriate here to dwell upon its details.

As a counsellor, he was cautious, deliberate and  
safe. As an advocate, he was equally effective in  
addressing a jury, and in arguing a question of law  
before the court. His wonderful faculty of illustra-  
tion, the clearness and soundness of his logic, together  
with his earnest and unaffected zeal, rendered him  
powerful under all circumstances.

He was scrupulously fair in his practice, and while  
he took no undue advantage of his adversary, on the  
other hand, he discarded no fact or principle, however  
apparently trifling, which could be legitimately used  
for the benefit of his client.

His integrity in this, as in every other pursuit of  
life in which he engaged, was always perfect. It is  
not wonderful that such qualities commanded, as they  
deserved, success.

His course as a public servant was equally distinguished.

In the year 1805, he was elected a member of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, for the City of Philadelphia—the first of a long series of tokens of the confidence and regard of his fellow citizens. In 1806, the office of “Recorder of the City of Philadelphia,” was tendered to him by GOVERNOR McKEAN, which he declined. That office had been successively held by MR. WILCOCKS and MR. DALLAS, immediately before the offer which has been referred to. Having declined a re-election in 1806, MR. SERGEANT was in 1807 again elected to the Legislature. During the session of 1807–8, he was chairman of the Committee on “Roads and inland navigation,” and in that capacity, reported the first act giving the direct aid of the State to internal improvements, a cause which he had always deeply at heart, and to which he never refused his assistance. The amount appropriated was nearly \$200,000, and it was applied to the construction of turnpike roads.

To us at present, the sum and the purpose may appear insignificant, but it was the beginning of that system, which has since led to such vast results, both of expenditure and utility. The State at that time numbered scarcely more than one-fourth of its present population. In wealth the disproportion was

still greater. No canals had yet been completed. The Delaware and Schuylkill, and the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Canal Companies, (afterwards merged in the Union Canal Company) had been projected, and the projectors had sunk a large part of their fortunes, in some feeble efforts towards their construction. No turnpike road existed beyond Lancaster. The Western Country—the Far West—commenced at the western slope of the Alleghanies. Merchandise, and even salt for supplying the necessities of the few inhabitants beyond them, were transported on pack-horses. At that time the aid thus afforded to the construction of turnpike roads, trifling as it may now appear, was highly important.

At the same session MR. SERGEANT introduced a bill, which was passed, prohibiting masquerades, which he considered dangerous to public morals, of the care of which he never lost sight.

In 1815 he was elected to Congress, by the district composed of the City and County of Philadelphia, and County of Delaware. He was elected from the same district to the three following Congresses; the last time, in 1820, without opposition; and at the end of that term, he declined a re-election, and devoted himself again exclusively to his private avocations.

MR. SERGEANT took his seat in Congress, at an interesting period. It was the first session after the



close of the war of 1812,—a fortunate war closed by a disgraceful peace,—a war which had not touched the strength or enfeebled the spirit of the country, but had much damnified its finances.

With the exception of a small eastern portion, the whole country was reduced to the use of paper currency; and of all the various currencies in use, in most of the States, that of the Government of the United States, was the most depreciated. The war had almost entirely cut off the revenue from customs, and the direct taxation, which had become necessary, was not only severely felt, but was comparatively unproductive.

The want of convenient roads, and other means of communication, had been sorely experienced during the contest, and had not only greatly embarrassed our military operations at critical periods, but had enormously enhanced the expenses. In fact, a large portion of the expense of the war, had been occasioned by the cost of transportation. It was calculated that every barrel of flour delivered at Detroit, for the use of the army, had cost in its conveyance, not less than \$60; and every pound of cannon ball and ammunition, at least 50 cents. Under these circumstances, it was natural, that the three leading topics of the day, should have been “the increase of the revenue,” the “restoration of the currency,” and “the improvement of the

internal communications of the country ;” all, subjects of great interest in themselves,—and of an interest heightened by the peculiar circumstances with which they were surrounded, and by the constitutional questions which were raised upon each of them. Notwithstanding the revival of foreign trade after the peace, and the system of double duties, (which were to cease in February, 1816,) the actual income of the year 1815, was less than sixteen millions of dollars ; while the necessary expenditures of that year, including the arrearages of the last, were estimated at not less than fifty millions.

The bank notes of New York were at 14 per cent discount for specie, those of Philadelphia and Baltimore, at 16 per cent., and still further south, the discount was greater. The duty of arranging a new system of finance, suited to the emergency, devolved upon the Secretary of the Treasury, ALEXANDER J. DALLAS, and was fulfilled by him, in a manner consistent with his tried ability and known patriotism.

He proposed to reduce the direct tax one-half, to repeal the most odious of the internal taxes,—especially those on domestic manufactures,—and to augment the tariff of duties on imports.

The tariff recommended by him, amounted on an average, to an increase of 42 per cent. above the rates preceding the war ; and was arranged with

particular reference to the encouragement of domestic manufactures. Those manufactures had been to a great extent, called into existence, by the war; which had prevented importations, and thrown our people for the time, upon their own resources of industry and enterprise, for necessary supplies. The policy of encouraging them, had been warmly urged in the President's message.

MR. MADISON, in that paper, used the following language:—"However wise the theory may be which leaves to the sagacity and interest of individuals, the application of their industry and resources, there are in this—as in other cases, exceptions to the general rule.

Besides the condition which the theory itself implies, of a reciprocal adoption by other nations, experience teaches, that so many circumstances must concur, in introducing and maturing manufacturing establishments, especially of the more complicated kinds, that a country may remain long without them, although sufficiently advanced, and in some respects, even peculiarly fitted for carrying them on with success.

Under circumstances giving a powerful impulse to manufacturing industry, it has made among us a progress, and exhibited an efficiency which justifies the belief, that, with a protection, not more than is due to the enterprising citizens, whose interests are now at

stake, it will become, at an early day, not only safe against occasional competitions from abroad, but a source of domestic wealth, and even of external commerce. In selecting the branches more or less entitled to public patronage, a preference is obviously claimed by such as will relieve the United States from a dependence on foreign supplies—ever subject to casual failures—for articles necessary for the public defence, or connected with the primary wants of individuals. It will be an additional recommendation of particular manufactures, when the materials for them are extensively drawn from our agriculture and consequently impart and insure to that great fund of national prosperity, an independence and encouragement, which cannot fail to be rewarded.”

MR. DALLAS recommended a permanent revenue, to be raised partly by internal taxes, but chiefly from duties on imports, to supply sixteen millions for current expenses, and ten millions annually, toward the interest and liquidation of the public debt. By his scheme, imported articles were arranged in three classes. First,—those of which a full domestic supply could be produced. Secondly,—those of which only a partial domestic supply could be relied on. And thirdly,—those produced, either not at all, or to a very trifling extent in this country. The first class included among other articles, cabinet wares, cordage,

iron castings, window glass, leather and all manufactures of it, and paper of every description. In the second class, were placed cotton and woollen goods, iron and many of its products, manufactures of other metals, distilled spirits and malt liquors.

The third class included molasses, sugar, salt, coal, and some other articles.

I have given some of the details of this classification, and it is interesting to observe, how vastly different they would be at the present day.

The bill establishing the system recommended by **MR. MADISON**, and framed by **MR. DALLAS**, was reported in the House of Representatives by **MR. LOWNDES**, and received the active support of **MR. CALHOUN**,—both, men of eminent ability, practical statesmanship, and at that period, most enlarged and national views.

To this system **MR. SERGEANT** gave, from the beginning, his earnest, active and efficient support. It was warmly opposed by the commercial interest, or rather by the interest engaged in foreign commerce, which regarded it as a blow aimed at their own well-being, not having then, any more than some have now, sufficiently enlarged their views, to understand the truth (established by all experience and history) that no country ever diminished its commerce, by increasing its productions. During the ensuing thirty years, some of those who had most powerfully advocated it,

fell off; others, who had opposed it, became its zealous advocates. Men were found to prank themselves highly on their devotion to it, who, in reality, understood no more than that it was a good political cry; and—probably in the uncontrollable course of events, the subject (which ought to have been kept in a higher atmosphere,) was finally thrust into the common arena of factious politics; the system was, in turn, maintained, destroyed and restored, and became for a time, a mere foot-ball of ignorant partizans. But, during the whole period, through good report and ill report, we may feel a just pride in referring to the fact, that **MR. SERGEANT** continued to be a discreet, active and consistent friend and promoter, of a system which he believed to be conducive to the welfare and best interests of the country. Unfortunately, however, the course of **MR. CALHOUN** was different on this and many other topics. A man of the highest public spirit, of commanding intellect, of great administrative talent, of untiring energy, and originally of the most liberal, enlarged and national disposition, who lived to see his ideas appropriated by cuckoo politicians, to find his position undermined by unworthy intrigues, his temper soured by ingratitude, and his range gradually narrowed, till instead of being a recognized leader in the advancement of the general good, he became wholly obstructive and sectional. But no disappoint-

ments could ever make him deceitful or treacherous. More than one jackdaw dressed very well afterwards in the feathers which he moulted when he changed his plumage. Probably history will do him justice—and them.

For the restoration of the currency, and even to prevent further depreciation and absolute confusion, there were obviously no means except to return to specie payments, and as the only mode of accomplishing that result, **MR. DALLAS** recommended the establishment of a specie paying bank, by the operations of which, the suspended banks might be compelled either to resume their payments, or to go out of existence.

The capital which he proposed was thirty-five millions, of which only twenty per cent. was to be paid in cash, the remainder in United States stock, equivalent to a six per cent. stock, except that seven millions of five per cent. stock were to be subscribed by the Government.

**MR. SERGEANT** desired to reduce the capital to twenty millions, but the proposition made to that effect was not carried, and a bill for establishing the bank, passed almost in the shape in which it had been reported, having been strenuously supported by **MR. CALHOUN**.

The institution thus created, had at first an unfortunate career, but having been rescued by the timely and judicious rigor of **MR. CHEVES**, enjoyed a long

course of prosperity under his able and accomplished successor, **MR. BIDDLE**, against whose judgment and wishes, towards the close of the term of its charter, it also was finally set afloat on the uneasy waves of party,—drawn into the political vortex, and after sundry regurgitations in that whirlpool of troubled waters, at last struck, and went to pieces, on the adamantine will of **GENERAL JACKSON**.

The third great question which agitated Congress at the period of which we have been speaking, was that of internal improvements. **MR. JEFFERSON**, previous to the commercial difficulties which preceded the war, had suggested the application of the surplus revenue to internal improvements, and **MR. MADISON**, at the session of 1815–16, directed the attention of Congress to such roads and canals which could best be executed under the national authority as objects of a wise and extended patriotism, intimating, however, some doubt of a want of a constitutional authority. At the next session, (1816–17,) **MR. CALHOUN**, by great effort, succeeded in carrying a bill, appropriating the bonus of a million and a-half, to be paid by the United States Bank, and all dividends upon the Government stock in that institution, as a fund for internal improvements, each State to be entitled to share in the expenditure proportional to its representation.



This bill passed the House, by a vote of eighty-six to eighty-four, and the Senate, by a vote of twenty to fifteen. It received the support of MR. SERGEANT, but was vetoed by the President, on the ground of unconstitutionality.

It has been noticed as a curious fact, that the only positive measure ever recommended during his Presidency by MR. JEFFERSON, the great progenitor of the resolutions of '98, turned out to be, in the opinion of his immediate friend and successor, no more within the legitimate scope of the constitutional power of Congress, than were the alien and sedition laws themselves.

Another topic of vast public importance, during MR. SERGEANT's early career in Congress, and on which he rendered distinguished service was, what has since been known as the Missouri question. The decision of that question has so seriously affected our subsequent history, and its consequences, past, present and future, are so momentous, that it may not be uninteresting to recur briefly to its course.

At the session of 1818-19, a bill was introduced for creating the Territory of Missouri, in which MR. TALMADGE, of New York, moved to insert a clause prohibiting any further introduction of slavery, and granting freedom to the children of slaves already in the territory, who had not attained the age of twenty-

five years. After a warm debate, this motion was carried by a vote of eighty-seven to seventy-six in the House.

A bill for creating the Territory of Arkansas was introduced and next considered, when MR. TAYLOR, of New York, moved to insert a similar restriction. The clause for liberating at twenty-five, the children of the slaves already in the territory, was agreed to, by a vote of seventy-five to seventy-three; but the clause prohibiting the further introduction of slaves, was lost by a vote of seventy to seventy-one. On the next day, the 18th of February, 1819, the clause which had been agreed to was again stricken out; and MR. TAYLOR then moved to add to the bill a proviso, that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, should thereafter be introduced into any part of the Territory of the United States, north of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , which was the northern boundary proposed for the new Territory of Arkansas. This amendment was so warmly opposed, both by northern and southern members, that MR. TAYLOR at last withdrew it, and the Arkansas bill, without any restrictions, was passed and sent to the Senate. This motion of MR. TAYLOR's was the original proposition of that compromise—of principle—which was ultimately adopted at the subsequent session. Down to this period, the admissions of new States had been alternately slave-holding and non-

slave-holding. Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi and Illinois had then been admitted. When the Arkansas bill was considered in the Senate, MR. ROBERTS, of Pennsylvania, moved to insert a prohibition of slavery, which failed by a vote of nineteen to fourteen—several northern Senators being absent, and one from Indiana voting against it. The bill then passed without a division.

The proviso which the House had inserted in the Missouri bill, against the further introduction of slaves, was stricken out in the Senate by a vote of twenty-two to sixteen. The clause for the freeing of the children of slaves, was also cancelled, receiving but seven votes. The House, by a vote of seventy-eight to seventy-six, refused to concur in this amendment, and the Missouri bill, at that session, was lost.

At the following session, of 1819-20, the subject was renewed. On motion of MR. TAYLOR, a committee was appointed to inquire into the expediency of prohibiting slavery west of the Mississippi. The bill to authorize Missouri to form a State Constitution, was postponed to await the report of this committee; but the committee being unable to agree, was afterwards discharged.

Meanwhile, an attempt was made to defer the consideration of a bill for the admission of Maine, which was now pending, until the Missouri bill should come

up, but the attempt was defeated, and the Maine bill was passed and sent to the Senate.

In the Senate, a clause for the admission of Missouri was tacked to the Maine bill, and to that clause **MR. ROBERTS**, of Pennsylvania, moved to add a prohibition of slavery, but after a lengthened debate, his motion was lost, by a vote of sixteen to twenty-seven, on the 1st of February, 1820 ; and, after another long debate, on the 16th of February, the union of Maine and Missouri in one bill, was carried by a vote of twenty-three to twenty-one. **MR. THOMAS**, of Illinois, then moved an amendment, prohibiting the introduction of slaves into any of the remainder of the Louisiana cession, north of the Arkansas boundary—that is, north of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , which was in fact the compromise clause, as afterwards finally adopted. This amendment was carried by a vote of thirty-four to ten, and thus amended, the bill was passed by a vote of twenty-four to twenty.

Meanwhile, the House was occupied in the consideration of a bill for the admission of Missouri, on the question of prohibiting the further introduction of slaves.

When the Maine bill was returned from the Senate, with the unrestricted admission of Missouri and **MR. THOMAS**'s compromise, the amendments thus made by the Senate, were disagreed to ; the vote against the

clause moved by MR. THOMAS, being one hundred and fifty-nine to eighteen. Committees of conference were then appointed.

Pending this conference, the Missouri Bill was reported to the House, with a clause prohibiting the further introduction of slaves, and was so passed, by a vote of ninety-three to eighty-four.

On the second of March, the Senate sent back this Missouri Bill, with the prohibition of slavery struck out, and THOMAS's proviso inserted instead; at the same time, the Committee of conference reported a recommendation to the Senate, to recede from their amendments to the Maine Bill, and asked the house to pass the Missouri Bill, as it had been last returned from the Senate; and finally the clause prohibiting slavery, was voted out of the Missouri Bill, by one hundred and thirty-four to forty-two.

During these discussions, on the ninth of February, 1820; the question then being on the amendment, proposed by MR. TAYLOR, MR. SERGEANT delivered one of the best reasoned, and most able speeches, that has ever been heard in the Hall of either House of Congress. It has almost exhausted the argument in favor of the prohibition of slavery in new states and territories, and it was no small token of the respect and esteem which was then entertained for him, (although comparatively but a young member and a young man) that he was

selected and pitted as the champion of the North, against the best abilities of the able and experienced members, who maintained the opposite doctrines. That speech remains, and is still a store-house from which materials are habitually drawn for the discussion and exposition of the subject. Thus **MR. THOMAS** and **MR. TAYLOR**, between them, had the honor of originating this compromise; **MR. SERGEANT**, the greater honor of opposing it. It was a measure so indefensible in itself, so fraught with injury to the whole country, so politically unjust to a large portion of it, and has been so fruitful of subsequent similar derelictions—so periodically prolific of an accursed brood—that the friends and townsmen of **MR. SERGEANT** may feel a just pride in the recollection of his determined hostility to it.

**MR. SERGEANT**'s efforts, were also directed to promote the establishment of a bankrupt law, for the relief of the commercial classes, a subject which he had deeply at heart, and to which his exertions were devoted, both then and at a later period.

This brief recital will show, by what legitimate means, by what faithful discharge of his duties, by what conscientious adherence to his principles, **MR. SERGEANT** earned that distinction, in his early career in Congress, which gave him from that period, a national reputation. The just influence which he

ultimately acquired in that body, may be illustrated by the fact, that, on one occasion, when a bill for establishing a Lottery had been introduced, he, by a few words, not only defeated the bill itself, but so effectually awakened the feelings of the House, that they ordered a Committee to bring in a bill to prohibit altogether the sale of Lottery Tickets in the District of Columbia.

Active as he was on the higher and more general questions which were presented, he never neglected those which were locally important to his constituents. The Bill for constructing the Break-water; the Bill for the erection of a new Mint; the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Bill; afford a few of many instances, which prove how true and faithful, was his regard to the interests of the District which he represented.

In 1826, MR. SERGEANT was appointed by the President, (MR. ADAMS) Minister from the United States, to what was commonly called, the Congress of Panama; which was expected to meet at Tacubaya, in Mexico; and to be composed of plenipotentiaries from the various states of North and South America.

The disturbances in South America, about that time, prevented the assembling of the Congress, and MR. SERGEANT returned to the United States in July, 1827.

The policy of MR. ADAMS in sending a Minister to

that Congress, was an enlarged one, whatever doubts might have been entertained of the practicability of carrying it out. His hope was to establish by formal negotiations, and the assent of all the states on this continent; "*an American system of maritime and international law,*" by which the abuses that had grown up in the European systems, might be disavowed, and their practice checked, so far at least as regarded this Continent and the American seas.

MR. ADAMS—himself a learned civilian, a tried and experienced statesman, and long trained in the best school, and formed upon the best models—could have paid no greater compliment to any man, than his selection to represent the United States, upon an occasion so interesting, and upon questions so vast, comprehensive and important.

That compliment was deservedly paid to JOHN SERGEANT.

In 1832, MR. SERGEANT was taken up as the whig candidate for the Vice-Presidency.

In the autumn of 1836, an opportunity was offered to his fellow-citizens, of conferring another distinguished mark of their confidence, by electing MR. SERGEANT a member of the Convention, then about to be held for amending the Constitution of Pennsylvania. That body assembled in May, 1837, and MR. SERGEANT was



chosen President, and discharged the duties of that office, till its final adjournment, in February, 1838.

He entered freely into the debates on the important subjects, which occupied that body during the term of its session.

Time will not permit a detailed reference, either to the subjects on which he spoke, or to the views which he expressed.

In all, he maintained the same fidelity to the principles which he had avowed previous to, and at the time of his election, which always distinguished him, when acting in a representative capacity.

His speech on the Judicial tenure, may be referred to, as containing a remarkably clear and forcible exposition of the doctrines and principles which he held and maintained on that question.

In 1840, MR. SERGEANT was again elected to Congress, from which he retired in the year 1841.

On GENERAL HARRISON's election to the office of President of the United States, he was tendered a place in the Cabinet, but refused the offer, and shortly afterwards declined the appointment by VICE-PRESIDENT TYLER to the mission to Great Britain. His last public official function was fulfilled in 1847, when he was selected on the part of the United States by MR. MARCY, then Secretary of War, as an Arbitrator, to determine the controversy then existing between the United States

and Delaware, as to the title to the "Pea Patch Island," and which was definitely settled by his award.

This contracted and imperfect sketch of his public services, by no means affords a view of all his labors for the public good. His activity in the cause of *internal improvement*, was constant and unwavering.

He was appointed one of the Board of Canal Commissioners, under the Act of 1825, and was the President of that Board till the period of his departure for Mexico, in 1826,

In the cause of charity, he was never appealed to in vain. He was connected with many of our most worthy charitable institutions, and in some of them, took a more active part than might have been thought consistent with his various public and professional occupations.

He acted as President of the "House of Refuge," from the date of its establishment; was also President of the "Apprentice's Library Company," and for many years there was in this city, scarcely a meeting for any worthy public object, to which he was not invited, and none which, when invited, he refused if able to attend. During all this period, he was engaged laboriously, in a laborious profession, "*determined*," to use his own language, "*to maintain his independence by his own exertions.*"

A few extracts from his correspondence, at different periods, will exhibit more faithfully than could any description, the tenderness of his sensibilities, the kindness of his heart, how sincerely he was devoted to the promotion of the welfare of his country and of his fellow men, and how humble and true were his religious feelings. In May, 1817, he writes from Paris, referring to the domestic affliction of a friend, as follows :

“I should not have known what the affliction was, which my friend had been called to suffer. I suppose there must be some previous letter, that has not yet come to hand.

I have written a few lines to him. But what a task !

When I think of the loss he has sustained, the tears come into my eyes and I am unable to write.

Why did I leave home? May He, who rules the Universe in justice and in mercy, give the sufferers consolation and support.”

He thus describes an interview with Mr. WEST, the artist, during the same visit to Europe.

“On Sunday, Mr. WEST paid us a long visit, which was a most particular attention, as he is not expected to take the trouble of returning calls.

His conversation was, as usual, full of interesting anecdotes. In the course of it, he related to us the

particulars of his interview with Bonaparte, a part of which I have somewhere seen in print.

During the peace of Amiens, MR. WEST made a visit to Paris, where, you may remember, the newspapers informed us, he was received with the distinction due to so eminent a man.

He was introduced to Bonaparte, then first Consul, in the gallery of the Louvre, a very appropriate place, for the introduction of a great artist, and accompanied Bonaparte in his walk through the gallery. Now, you shall have his own narrative, as nearly as I can give it.

“The busts were all arranged in a long line. As we passed along, Bonaparte did not speak a word, till we came to that of WASHINGTON. He stopped in front of that bust, folded his arms, and fixed his eyes steadily upon it, as if in profound thought. After some time he turned to LeBrun, the third Consul, and said aloud, with a good deal of energy and feeling:—‘I had rather be that man, than any one that ever existed.’” I felt (continued MR. WEST) the color flush in my face, and if I could have ventured to speak my thoughts, should have said to him—“You have now an opportunity to imitate the example of WASHINGTON.”

In another epistle, after describing his visit to the field of Waterloo, he proceeds thus, to convey an idea of the feelings which the scene had excited in his mind.

"At this spot, a warm imagination might perhaps for a moment, conjure up the scene of battle, but for myself, I must confess that when I surveyed the whole space, which had been occupied for the work of destruction, when I saw it all calm and tranquil, and the beneficent works of Providence going on as if they had never been interrupted, one single reflection occupied my mind. I thought only of the feebleness of man's mightiest efforts, compared with the majestic course of nature.

"He can destroy his own works effectually, as the farm of Huguemont testifies, but he can scarcely make the print of his footstep upon the earth.

"I have often felt my own insignificance. I have felt it particularly at sea, when the unlimited expanse of sky and water, made the ship appear like an atom, but I never felt it so strongly as at Waterloo."

In 1827, he writes from Mexico.

"My life here is a good deal solitary. It would be intolerable, but for books, and for the hope I cherish, that I may be the instrument of some good to our beloved country, and to mankind."

Again—"You may suppose I am badly off—and so I am in truth. I have no resource but in reading and study. Last evening (Sunday) I read the whole of the Gospel by Mathew, and I hope one fruit of my residence here will be, a better acquaintance with that

good Book. I must also say, the Book of Common Prayer is a consolation to me, especially on Sundays, which you must know are perverted here to strange uses.

“It is a miserable thing, to be without a place of worship on Sunday; I try to mark and keep the day by reading my Prayer Book and Bible.”

And again—“What I long for is a Sunday at home. The quiet, order, and cheerful stillness of that day, the cleanly and becoming appearance of the people, the excellent character and conduct of our clergy, and the general repose, prepare one for the beautiful introduction of the church service. ‘The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him.’ But here it is a day of tumultuous dissipation, more noisy than any other in the week, unless it happen to be a great feast, and that is exactly like a Sunday.”

These extracts show the earnest zeal and sincerity with which he referred all that was good in morals here, to the true source of authority,—THE DIVINE PRECEPTS,—and to the true motive of their practice—loyalty to the author of those precepts, and the expectation of happiness hereafter. The theory of his whole life, may be found in an extract, from an address delivered by himself, many years since.

“If we would know the full worth of integrity, we must lay aside all other judgments, and each for him-

self conscientiously consult his own, first endeavoring earnestly to enlighten it. What will it tell him? Man is a portion of eternity. Not a fragment broken off and thrown upon this earth, here to begin and end, but an abiding portion of eternity. The links which bind him to it, he cannot break.

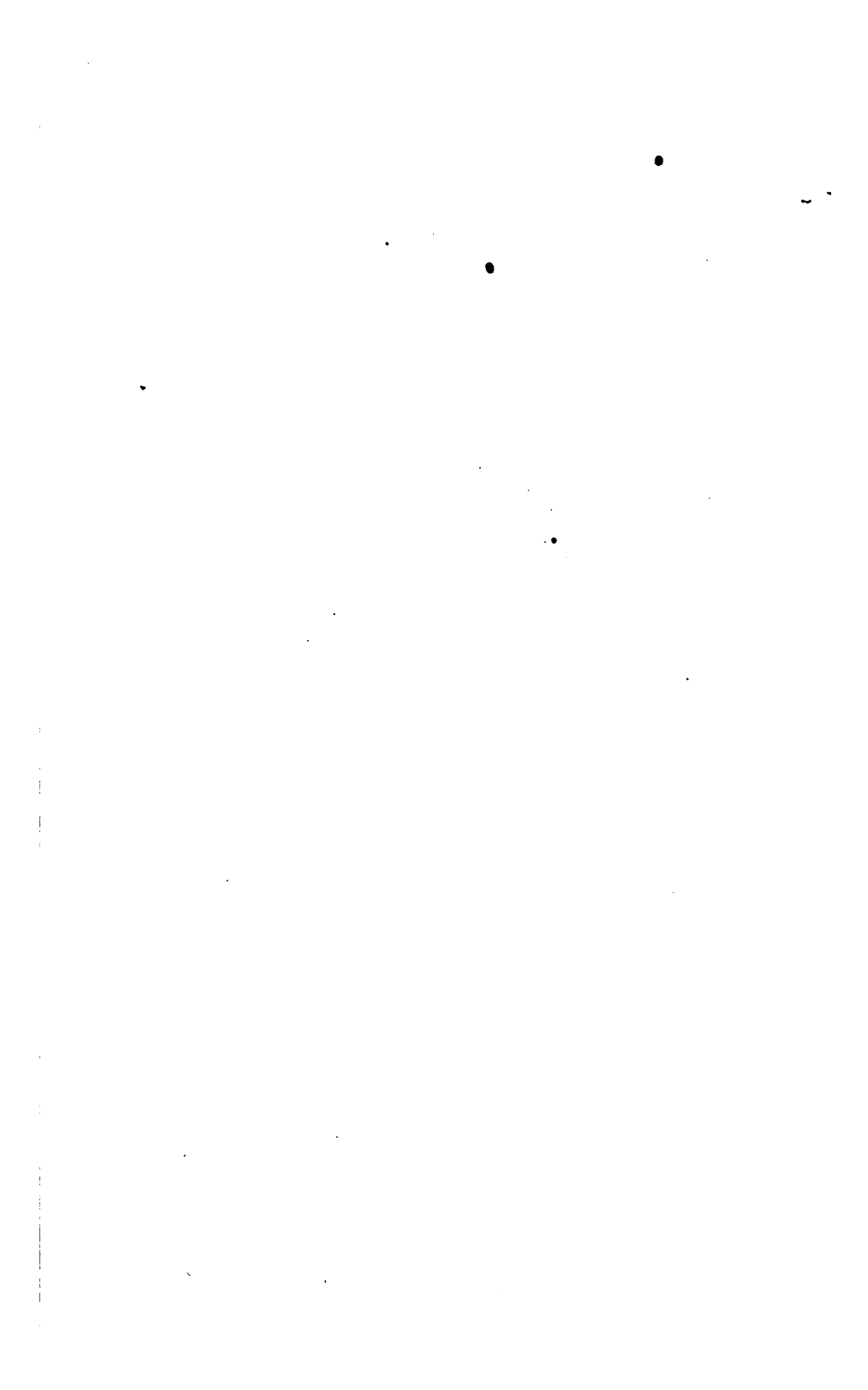
“They are his virtues or his vices. These, with right exertions, he can control. He cannot, by any efforts of his own, excel in intellectual power. He cannot acquire riches, he cannot achieve greatness, therefor he is not accountable for the want of them. But he can be good or bad, and upon this capacity it is, that his accountability rests, and according to it, is to be his destiny.”

To this beautiful passage it is to be added, that he did excel in intellectual power; that he did achieve a distinguished position; that he did for a long series of years, and to the time of his death, enjoy the confidence and esteem of his fellow citizens, and the general public.

Through life he fulfilled all public functions faithfully and sought none unworthily. He maintained his personal independence by an honorable attention to his own affairs, and thus gave the strongest pledge of fidelity in the management of others entrusted to him. He regulated his expenditures by his means, and never

stooped to receive dishonest gain or eleemosynary assistance. By his inflexible integrity, not less than by his eminent ability, he added lustre to Pennsylvania, and richly earned the honors which are now paid to his memory.





14





